

as that of the parent U.S. patent application, which is July 9, 1997. However, the effective U.S. filing date of Matsui is December 3, 1997. Thus, Matsui is not a valid prior art reference.

Therefore, the Applicants respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration of the application, withdrawal of the outstanding rejections, allowance of claims 23-31, and the prompt issuance of a Notice of Allowability are respectfully solicited.

If this application is not in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone listed below.

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, the Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension, together with any additional fees that may be due with respect to this paper, may be charged to counsel's Deposit Account No. 01-2300, **referencing docket number 101216-09002.**

Respectfully submitted,

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